



The Honorable Sam Liccardo, Mayor of San José,  
and Members of the San José Council,  
200 E Santa Clara St.  
San José, CA 95113  
via email, sent March 11, 2022

Subject: Support for, and comments on, the Mayor's 2022 Budget Message

Dear Mayor Liccardo and Councilmembers,

The District 6 Neighborhood Leaders Group (D6NLG), a decade-old association of involved community representatives of the numerous District 6 neighborhoods and associations, approved at our March 7th meeting that we write you regarding this year's budget proposal.

We appreciate your thorough and thoughtful budget message. We would like to emphasize, and expand upon, some of the budget message's points.

### **Homelessness**

The issue of homelessness impacts all of us in San José, both the housed and the unhoused. We care about our fellow residents. We appreciate that this is a multi-faceted challenge, requiring multiple approaches.

**>> *We ask you to expand the scope of the Homeless Outreach therapeutic workers to also include serving with City parks maintenance activities.***

We support the proposal in Section A, item 7, to provide funding for "BeautifySJ encampment management team to include therapeutic specialists who can coordinate behavioral health and other services for unhoused residents, and respond effectively to their crises." Park maintenance workers also encounter uncooperative and acutely suffering community members in many of our parks. They too currently must rely on Housing staff to deploy contracted outreach providers whose capacity limitations inhibit timely response. Being able to have a coordinated response that provides services at the point of contact will ensure that unhoused residents with more acute behaviors can be supported with services, while making sure that park maintenance workers can complete their work safely.

**>> *We ask you to expand the scope of MCAT to also serve our parks.***

The Mobile Crisis Response Team (Budget Sec. B, item 3) funds police officers to "receive crisis and intervention training on how to deescalate situations and connect people to mental health support services." In order to keep our parks from becoming blighted, we must provide this team to serve out in parks, both to ensure the safety of our park maintenance workers and to assist the acutely suffering individuals they encounter.



**>> *We ask you to add maintenance staff for Guadalupe River Park Gardens***

At the insistence of the Federal Aviation Administration, the City is systematically clearing portions of Guadalupe Gardens of its homeless encampments. Many of the displaced residents are moving into other reaches of the park, and GRPG needs added staff to manage this influx.

**>> *We ask you to add a position to help with trail operations.***

The newly opened Coyote Creek Trail is regularly patrolled to assure public safety. Additional staff would allow for improved patrol of the Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek Trails.

**Climate Resilience – Urban Forests**

As noted in Section D, item 1(D), “The dramatic decline in San José’s tree canopy will have lasting and increasingly severe impacts on human health, air quality, neighborhood livability, and energy consumption.” We recognize that we are fortunate in District 6 to have areas of extensive tree canopy, and we hope the City will work to enable and support areas lacking tree canopies to establish trees so that they too can enjoy the benefits. Assistance and training on proper tree planting techniques to minimize street and sidewalk damage, and assistance with early-life pruning to ensure healthy tree structure, would help.

It is also important to preserve our existing trees when feasible, whether threatened by development projects or routine street pavement maintenance. And the trees in our city parks also need help:

**>> *We ask you to increase the budget for tree maintenance in the PRNS Department.***

The Parks Department presently has an annual budget of only \$150,000 for tree maintenance and pruning for the entire park and trail system, as revealed in the recent Tree Report presented to council. Through decades of neglect, older trees regularly show their age by tossing branches that should have been trimmed long ago. New trees are being planted in our parks, and they must be pruned properly in their early years in order to develop into healthy and well-structured trees and to support a lush and safe urban forest. The tree maintenance budget should be increased to reflect the increased number of trees being planted and their required early maintenance. We recommend doubling the budget for the first year to \$300,000 and using the Parks Operations Division’s Business Intelligence to provide a way to link an ongoing tree maintenance allocation to their inventory of newly planted and aging trees.

**Blight – Park Maintenance**

We support the Mayor’s recommendation to continue permanently the Parks Rehabilitation Strike Team (Budget Section C, item 2).



**>> We ask you to implement a “hire ahead” program for the park maintenance division.**

We note the 19% vacancy rate in the park maintenance division, and applaud staff’s use of the Resilience Corps and outreach to develop programs to create a pipeline, as highlighted in the recent Sustainable Park Maintenance report given to Council’s Neighborhood Services and Education Committee in February. We believe that an additional program is needed to counteract the resignation of older workers and of new hires who discover that don’t like the work or no longer wish to live here. Many of the positions are entry level requiring little education, and these entry level jobs often suffer from high turnover. Prior to 2017, the operations division consistently had a 5 to 10% vacancy. New workers often need an extended period of training – working with an experienced parks maintenance worker – before they are fully effective. However, almost as soon as a large recruitment and onboarding effort is completed, there are more vacancies to be filled. The hiring procedure for such a large division is very labor intensive for human resources and the parks managers and supervisors. We note that the Police Department has identified a similar problem with their staffing – as soon as they recruit to full staffing, they lose officers and are again below the authorized positions – and they manage this by “hiring ahead.” We recommend that the Parks Department also be authorized to “hire ahead,” and we suggest a pilot with 5% overstaffing on hiring day with the department reporting how this impacts the ability to staff at authorized levels. With typical turnover of entry level positions, there should be no impact to the budget. We also support investigation competitive pay and continuing other pipeline programs.

### **Public Safety – Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Innovations**

We agree with the statement in Section B, item 5:

“Where we can have some impact on safety, we must take action. Part of the solution requires changing San José’s antiquated, suburban roadway designs that encourage high-speed driving and pedestrian-challenged streetscapes.”

**>> We ask you to expand the scope to include improving intersections to make them less attractive for “side shows.”**

San José’s “antiquated, suburban wide roadways” often have large intersections that encourage “side shows” which place participants, spectators, and nearby property owners at risk of death and injury. While Vision Zero’s Best Practices may require large, expensive capital projects, some communities have successfully piloted several quick-build improvements such as Martinez’s raised bumps (Bott’s dots). We recommend sufficient funding for SJDOT staff to apply to grants such as the State’s Traffic Safety Office [Communities Against Racing and Sideshows](#)<sup>1</sup> (CARS) grant. Further, we recommend waiving fees for property owners who wish to upgrade their sidewalks (in collaboration with DOT and compatible with Vision Zero goals) or their large parking lots in order to deter side shows on private property.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.abc10.com/article/traffic/california-illegal-sideshow-street-racing/103-d3cedd38-5573-4c63-9879-ee0c77485d67>



## Public Safety – Fireworks

We are dismayed to see no mention of fireworks in the proposed budget, either for funding of public displays or for deterring illegal private use. The City has been trying to control the unregulated use of fireworks because of their dangers to life and to property.

There are “hotspots” (no pun intended) in the city where community members have been reported in the past to be gathering to “stop and drop” fireworks: selling and/or detonating from vehicles. Illegal fireworks are common on multiple holidays through the year, but their most dangerous occurrence is 4th of July when the grass is dry. SJFD staffs up and prepares for the grass fires. Meanwhile community members in neighborhoods with older homes live in fear of fireworks falling on their property and destroying their homes. This year, the 4th of July festival will return, and the public display is hoped to somewhat reduce the prevalence of illegal displays. However, the public display downtown is likely to encourage the return of traditional hotspots of illegal activity just outside the downtown core, such as Delmas Park, Gardner/North Willow Glen, and the Washington district. These neighborhoods all have gathering points that provide good viewing of the downtown display, and vehicles have been seen in past years selling or igniting large fireworks at these points.

**>> We ask for funding for DOT and SJPD to put together a hotspot traffic management plan**

Implementation of a traffic plan can prevent easy vehicular ingress and egress to/from these hotspots by these fireworks vehicles. DOT has traditionally closed Communication Hill and Church on the Hill on July 4th evenings: we ask that other impacted areas also be protected. Further, we request similar analysis and action for other neighborhoods that have experienced these vehicles that stop and drop their destructive and dangerous fireworks.

We look forward to following the process of refining this budget so as to better help San José and its residents to improve and thrive.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Lawrence Ames', is written over a light blue circular stamp. Below the signature, the text 'Dr. Lawrence Ames, Chair, D6NLG' is printed in a black, sans-serif font.

cc: Jennifer Maquire, San José City Manager  
City Clerk  
Jim Shannon, Budget Director  
Jon Cicirelli, Parks Recreation and Neighborhood Services  
John Ristow, Department of Transportation  
Kerrie Romanow, Environmental Services  
Jennifer Schembri, Human Resources  
Robert Sapien, Fire Dept.  
Jacky Morales Ferrand, Housing  
Anthony Mata, Chief, SJPD